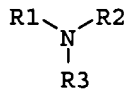
AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A process for extracting 2-keto-L-gulonic acid (KGA) from a polar solvent comprising ascorbic acid and 2-keto-L-gulonic acid, which process comprises the following step:

   (a) extraction of the 2-keto-L-gulonic acid from the polar~~, preferably aqueous,~~ solvent with an extractant 1 comprising a tertiary amine of the formula



   where R1, R2 and/or R3 is in each case a saturated unbranched or branched alkyl radical having, independently of one another or simultaneously, 6 to 14 carbon atoms;

   and a polar organic diluent; where the diluent is a saturated branched or unbranched alkyl alcohol having 8 to 12 carbon atoms or an amide or an aromatic compound,

   and where the extractant 1 has a miscibility gap with the solvent.

2. (Original)A process as claimed in claim 1, where the alkyl radical R1, R2 and/or R3 comprises in each case 8 to 12 carbon atoms.

3. (Currently amended) A process as claimed in ~~claim 1 or 2~~ claim 1, where the tertiary amine is tri-n-octylamine and/or tri-n-decylamine.

4. (Currently amended)A process as claimed in ~~any of claims 1 to 3~~ claim 1, where the diluent is i- or n-decanol.

5. (Currently amended)A process as claimed in ~~any of claims 1 to 4~~ claim 1, where the ratio of tertiary amine of the formula I to the diluent is from 20:80 to 80:20~~, preferably 40:60~~.

6. (Currently amended) A process as claimed in ~~any of claims 1 to 5~~ claim 1, comprising the following further step:

(b) back-extraction of the KGA from the loaded extractant 1 with a polar extractant 2, resulting in a KGA-loaded extractant 2.

7. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 6, where extractant 2 and the solvent consist essentially of the same solvent components.

8. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 7, where the extraction temperature T_1 is from 5°C to 100°C lower than the back-extraction temperature T_2.

9. (Currently amended) A process as claimed in ~~any of claims 6 to 8~~ claim 6, comprising the following further step:

(c) recycling of extractant 1 from which the KGA was back-extracted in step (b) into the extraction of step (a).

10. (Currently amended) A process as claimed in ~~any of claims 6 to 9~~ claim 6, comprising the following further step:

(d) recycling of the KGA-loaded extractant 2 from the back-extraction in step (b) into a process for preparing ascorbic acid from KGA.

11. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 10, comprising the following further steps:

(e) concentration of the KGA-loaded extractant 2 before the recycling in step (d); and

(f) optionally, recycling of the vapors from the evaporation in (e) as extractant 2 in step (b).

12. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 11, comprising at least one of the following further steps:

(g) washing of the KGA-loaded extractant 1 with the solvent or with the mother liquor from the crystallization of ascorbic acid from the solvent and combining of the ascorbic acid-containing wash solution with the ascorbic acid-loaded solvent in step (a);

(h) concentration of the ascorbic acid-loaded solvent 1; and

(i) recycling of the solvent discharge from step (h) into the back-extraction in step (b) as extractant 2.

13. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 12, comprising the following further steps:

(j) isolation of the ascorbic acid from the ascorbic acid-loaded solvent, with a mother liquor remaining behind; and

(k) optionally, recycling of the mother liquor from step (j) into the concentration in step (h).

14. (Currently amended) A process for preparing ascorbic acid, which comprises the following steps:

i. lactonization of 2-keto-L-gulonic acid;

ii. extraction of the KGA from the ascorbic acid/KGA mixture as set forth in claim 2 ~~any of claims 2 to 12~~; and

iii. isolation of the ascorbic acid from the ascorbic acid-loaded solvent.

15. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 14, where partial lactonization is carried out.

16. (New) A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein said solvent is aqueous.

17. (New) A process as claimed in claim 2, wherein
the tertiary amine is tri-n-octylamine or tri-n-decylamine or mixtures thereof,
the diluent is i- or n-decanol and
the ratio of tertiary amine of the formula I to the diluent is from 40:60.